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AD HOC COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE 1981 PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 14 November 1980, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. von WECHMAR (Federal Republic of Germany)

later: Mr. MASHINGAIDZE (Zimbabwe)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

OPENING STATEMENTS

1. The CHAIRMAN said that one of the most dramatic consequences of severe political instability, violations of human rights and international conflicts was the wave of refugees and displaced persons, now numbering more than 10 million, who needed assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Unfortunately, that situation would continue for as long as greater political and socio-economic stability was not reached world-wide. Solutions for conflicts must be sought in international forums, and Governments must be urged to refrain from creating conditions that compelled people to flee their countries. Meanwhile, the international community must come to the aid of the innocent victims. The High Commissioner, who had been able to help many victims of political storms, must be given the necessary resources to pursue his humanitarian task. UNHCR's financial requirements for 1981 were estimated to reach $500 million, the same amount as the projected expenditures for the current year. The international community must show its solidarity and assume its responsibility in helping the High Commissioner in his efforts to build a new life for the victims of intolerance and conflicts.

2. He invited the representative of Zimbabwe, Vice-President of the General Assembly, to take the Chair.

3. Mr. Mashingaidze (Zimbabwe) took the Chair.

4. The CHAIRMAN said the people of Zimbabwe, during its heroic struggle for independence, had benefited greatly from the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UNHCR had provided relief to people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, had helped to provide education for refugees and displaced persons to prepare them for the future work of building their country and had played an important part in the repatriation of the refugees after the Lancaster House Agreement. It was therefore not surprising that the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe should have requested UNHCR to co-ordinate a humanitarian programme for the resettlement and reintegration of 660,000 persons uprooted by the war.

5. The work of UNHCR in Zimbabwe was only one example of his activities; the refugee problem had become universal, and millions of persons turned to UNHCR for help. However, the High Commissioner would be able to carry out his task only if the international community provided him with resources commensurate to the needs of the refugees. Unfortunately, the refugees population was ever growing, and with it the financial responsibilities of the international community; at the last pledging conference it had been estimated that $350 million would be needed in 1980, but it was now clear that the total UNHCR expenditure for the year would be approximately $500 million.

6. The present situation was undoubtedly critical, but the work of the High Commissioner showed that it must not be considered hopeless. The international

community must not only contribute generously to UNHCR but do all it could to end the policies and practices which bred the refugee problem in the world.

7. Speaking as the representative of Zimbabwe, he expressed his appreciation at having been given the opportunity to preside over the meeting of the Committee.

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

8. Mr. HARTLING (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that in recent years there had been a dramatic increase in the number of refugees. In 1980, new and critical situations had arisen in Cameroon, Pakistan and Somalia, where the additional assistance requirements, apart from basic food, had totalled $100 million.

9. At its thirty-first session in Geneva in October, the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme had approved a target of $335 million for the UNHCR General Programmes for 1981. In addition, the Committee had taken note that the over-all requirements of the Office for 1981, covering both General and Special Programmes, might be in the region of $500 million.

10. The Executive Committee had strongly endorsed the principle that the financial response from Governments to the universal problem of refugees should be universal and equitable, since without adequate financial support it would be impossible to meet the present needs of refugees. Furthermore, it was undesirable that the increasingly large financial burden of UNCHR's programmes should fall upon the few traditional donor Governments. He therefore appealed to governments to contribute regularly and, in the case of those whose contributions had been limited to date, to make every effort to raise the level of their contributions. He himself was constantly seeking to increase the number of contributing countries and to pursue new avenues of funding.

11. The needs of refugees in Africa were of particular concern; the countries of that continent continued to display generosity in granting asylum, protection and assistance to refugees, but the burden on them of that humanitarian assistance was extremely heavy. In 1981, his Office would make every effort to meet the needs of African refugees within the General and Special Programmes.

12. Refugee needs in Asia remained considerable. In Pakistan, increasing numbers of Afghan refugees needed help not only to survive, but to engage in productive activities. The caseload of refugees in South-East Asia had decreased but a considerable number continued to need help.

13. He was deeply grateful for the support given to his Office in the past, and he hoped that at the current meeting as many delegations as possible would pledge substantial, firm and unearmarked contributions so as to permit the programmes approved by the Executive Committee to be implemented as from the very beginning of the year with the necessary scope and geographical balance.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

14. The representative of FINLAND announced that, subject to parliamentary approval, his country would make a voluntary contribution for 1981 of 2.2 million Finnish marks, equivalent to approximately $US 600,000.

15. The representative of the UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND said that the United Kingdom had been a consistent supporter of UNHCR and a major contributor to its funds, besides providing other forms of practical assistance. It pledged for the calendar year 1981 the sum of £4.4 million sterling in cash and cereals to the value of £1 million sterling. The total value of the United Kingdom's pledge was therefore approximately $US 13 million.

16. The representative of SWITZERLAND said that in the present circumstances when the work of the High Commissioner was constantly increasing, it was more necessary than ever to give firm support to his activities. The Swiss Government, in keeping with its long-standing tradition, was doing all it could to alleviate the plight of refugees; Switzerland's assistance to various programmes of national and international organizations, including the Office of the High Commissioner, had totalled 20 million Swiss francs for each of the last two years. Subject to parliamentary approval, Switzerland pledged a contribution of 1.6 million Swiss francs for the financial year 1981. A further sum of 400,000 Swiss francs had been earmarked to support whatever special measures UNHCR might adopt during the year. In practice that earmarking had always been exceeded, as was evidenced by the special contribution of 2 million Swiss francs which the Federal Government had recently made to the UNHCR General Programmes.

17. The representative of IRELAND said that his delegation had more than once expressed its profound admiration for the humanitarian work carried out by UNHCR. His Government continued to support the activities of UNHCR, but he could not at the moment announce the exact amount of its contribution, which would be communicated to the Secretariat in due course.

18. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA announced that his Government pledged $57,763,000 to the work of the High Commissioner for the fiscal year 1981. Of that amount, $28.3 million was for the High Commissioner's programmes in Africa; for Indo-Chinese refugees, the United States would contribute $14 million and further pledged an additional $1,375,000 for the maintenance of the refugee processing centres. His Government pledged $9 million for the High Commissioner's programmes to assist Khmer refugees outside of Kampuchea. The United States pledged $1 million to the High Commissioner's programmes in the Near East, $1 million to the programme in Latin America and $3,088,000 for the over-all allocations account of UNHCR. Those figures were based on the United States fiscal year, not the calendar year, and therefore covered the period from 1 January to 30 September 1981 and represented 75 per cent of the traditional calendar year contributions. Contributions over and above that amount to the High Commissioner's programmes, especially the operation in Pakistan, would be forthcoming if the needs of the High Commissioner warranted.

19. The representative of the NETHERLANDS said that his country was a staunch supporter of the activities of the High Commissioner, who was doing an excellent job in very difficult circumstances, owing to the enormous increase in the number of refugees. The Netherlands Government would contribute to the programme for 1981 the equivalent of 10.3 million Dutch guilders (approximately $US 5,050,000), subject to parliamentary approval. The Netherlands would continue in 1981 to consider positively requests for additional contributions to specific programmes; its policy in that respect would be based on the contributions made in 1980.

20. The representative of MONACO pledged a contribution of 100,000 francs, subject to approval of Monaco's budget.

21. The representative of ICELAND announced a pledge of $22,900 to the general programme of UNHCR, subject to parliamentary approval.

22. The representative of DENMARK said that the debate in the Third Committee had clearly demonstrated the seriousness of the world refugee problem, which in the past year had been aggravated by conflicts and tensions, notably in Africa and Asia. The responsibility for giving the High Commissioner for Refugees the means to act effectively rested upon the international community as a whole, and thus upon all Governments. Subject to parliamentary approval, the Danish contribution to the General Programmes of UNHCR for 1981 would be 16.5 million Danish kroner, or approximately $US 3 million. Furthermore, still subject to parliamentary approval, his Government pledged a contribution of 7.4 million Danish kroner to the High Commissioner's educational and similar activities in 1981, an amount equal to $1.3 million. Denmark would also consider favourably in 1981 appeals for contributions to Special Programmes, to which Danmark had so far in 1980 contributed a total of 24 million Danish kroner, or $4.2 million.

23. The representative of the FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY said that the pledging conference afforded an opportunity of drawing the attention of parliaments and Governments, and of the public at large, to the world refugee situation. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany was prepared to provide its share of the aid for the first asylum countries, but it believed that humanitarian aid should be a matter of universal concern and not the privilege of a few countries. His Government's financial contribution to UNHCR activities in 1979 and 1980 had exceeded 30 million marks.

24. As the 1981 budget had not yet been approved, his Government was at present unable to make any definite pledges for UNHCR activities. However, it would continue its endeavours to support the activities of UNHCR through regular voluntary contributions, humanitarian aid funds, the promotion of funds-in-trust projects and the provision of food supplies.

25. The representative of CANADA said that her country attached particular importance to the full support of UNHCR by the whole international community. The search for durable solutions to the grave refugee problems required a co-ordinated effort on a number of different fronts. A laudable contribution was made by first asylum countries, where the settlement of refugees often represented a considerable social and economic burden for their own populations. Canada, for its part,

(The representative of Canada)

would resettle 16,000 refugees from all geographical areas in 1981, and the direct cost would be considerable.

26. The precise level of Canada's financial contribution to UNHCR was still to be determined, but she could state that Canada would, subject to parliamentary approval, contribute to the UNHCR General Programmes in 1981 at least 2.5 million Canadian dollars. That figure would represent an increase of more than 11 per cent over the contribution for the current year.

27. The representative of CHILE announced a contribution of $US 20,000 and said that his country had not been able, as in previous years, to increase its contribution owing to other specific contributions to the Office of the High Commissioner and its general commitments to international agencies.

28. The representative of JAPAN said that, although the problems of refugees were fundamentally of a humanitarian nature, they had profound implications for the peace and stability of the region concerned and of the rest of the world. Of particular concern to her country were the Indo-Chinese refugees in East Asia and the Afghan refugees in West Asia. In its efforts to resolve such problems, her Government had contributed to UNHCR for the year 1979 a total of approximately $US 68 million, which had represented 24 per cent of the total contributions to UNHCR assistance programmes for that year. In addition, her Government had extended multilateral assistance through other United Nations bodies and international agencies as well as bilateral assistance directly to the affected countries.

29. From the long-term point of view, the Government of Japan believed that the solution of refugee problems must be sought at their origin; however, it would continue in 1981 to make every effort to provide assistance to refugees in co-operation with the various international organizations and countries. Because her Government's budget was still in the planning stage, she was unable to pledge a specific contribution for 1981. The precise amount would be communicated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations as soon as the proposed budget was approved.

30. The representative of MEXICO announced, subject to approval by the competent authorities, a contribution of $US 50,000 for 1981.

31. The representative of CHINA said that his Government had always supported the activities of UNHCR and had provided assistance to refugees bilaterally and through other agencies. China had received more than 260,000 Indo-Chinese refugees and in recent years had expended the equivalent of $580 million on providing them with assistance. His country's contribution to UNHCR for 1981 would be $US 300,000.

32. The representative of INDONESIA said that, subject to approval by the competent authorities, his Government pledged a contribution of $US 4,000 as a token of Indonesia's support for UNHCR activities.

33. The representative of the REPUBLIC OF KOREA announced that, subject to parliamentary approval, his Government would contribute $US 10,000 to the 1981 programmes.

34. The representative of SENEGAL drew attention to the serious situation of refugees in Africa and said that the international community must support assistance activities. His Government would make a contribution of $US 3,000 in 1981.

35. The representative of SWEDEN stressed the importance of financial resources for assisting refugees. His Government had decided to increase its contribution to UNHCR and pledged 40 million Swedish kroner, equivalent to approximately $US 9.5 million, in 1981; of that amount $US 6.5 million would be allocated to the regular programmes and the balance of $US 3 million to educational activities. His Government had further decided to pledge the amount of 50 million Swedish kroner for each of the years 1982 and 1983, subject to parliamentary approval.

36. During the fiscal year 1980-1981, his Government had contributed a total of about $US 150 million to many assistance programmes through different channels; that amount was equivalent to 13 per cent of the entire budget for Swedish development assistance.

37. His delegation wished to stress the urgent need for a more equal sharing of the burden, which currently fell on a very limited number of countries; he urged those Governments which were in a position to do so to contribute or to increase their contributions.

38. The representative of LUXEMBOURG said that, subject to parliamentary approval, her Government would make a contribution of 325,000 Luxembourg francs.

39. The representative of SPAIN announced that, subject to parliamentary approval, his country would make a contribution of $US 80,000, in convertible currency, to the general programmes of UNHCR in 1981, representing an increase of 166 per cent over its 1980 contribution.

40. The representative of TURKEY said that his delegation had, on previous occasions, expressed its deep concern regarding the difficult situation of the refugees and its conviction that the international community had a duty to alleviate that situation. Notwithstanding the scarcity of Turkey's foreign exchange resources, his Government had decided to contribute to UNHCR's programmes in 1981. The national budget for 1980-1981 had not yet been prepared, however, and his delegation would inform the Secretariat of the exact amount of its contribution at a later date.

41. The representative of TUNISIA said that his Government would make a contribution of $US 3,970 to UNHCR in 1981, representing an increase of 15 per cent over its contribution for the previous year. That modest contribution demonstrated his Government's appreciation of UNHCR's work and its solidarity with the refugees, who currently numbered more than 10 million persons.

42. The representative of FRANCE said that his Government had allocated substantial sums in its budget for the reception and resettlement of refugees in French territory. Subject to parliamentary approval, his Government would make a contribution of 3,202,000 French francs to the programme of UNHCR for 1981.

43. The representative of the HOLY SEE said that, as in the past, the Holy See would contribute to UNHCR's programmes. He was not yet in a position to announce the exact amount of that contribution, but would do so as soon as possible.

44. The representative of MALAYSIA said that his Government was participating in humanitarian activities designed to meet the needs of the illegal immigrants from Viet Nam who were entering Malaysia as a country of first refuge. The financial consequences of those activities meant that Malaysia could only make a symbolic contribution of $US 1,500 to UNHCR's programmes.

45. The representative of VENEZUELA paid tribute to the work of the High Commissioner and announced that his Government would make a contribution of 36,000 bolivars, equivalent to $US 20,000, to UNHCR's programmes.

46. The representative of the SUDAN said that, in order to alleviate the plight of the refugees and bearing in mind the substantial number of refugees in his country, amounting to approximately half a million persons, his Government had proclaimed 1980 the "Year of the Refugee in the Sudan". Moreover, the participants in the conference on refugees held at Khartoum in June 1980 had expressed their readiness to provide the Sudan with financial and material assistance so that the country could continue to provide necessary services to the refugees. The interagency mission which had visited the Sudan in June 1980 to assess the assistance required to finance the programmes for the relief and settlement of refugees, had stated that serious economic constraints, together with the Government's heavy external debt, had made it difficult for the Sudan to provide normal social services to its own population, much less to extend services to a large number of refugees. In spite of the difficulties which the Sudan was facing and the meagre resources provided to it, his delegation wished to announce a symbolic contribution of 3,000 Sudanese pounds to the UNHCR voluntary funds. In fact, the real contribution of the Sudan to meeting the needs of half a million refugees was three times greater than total international assistance allocated to the country.

47. The representative of GREECE pledged a voluntary contribution of $US 70,000 to the programme of UNHCR for 1981. That contribution represented an increase of 16.6 per cent over 1980 and was subject to parliamentary approval. His Government would also make an additional contribution of $US 10,000 to the programme of UNHCR for 1980, to be used by the High Commissioner for any programme he might deem appropriate or eventually for the Fund for Durable Solutions.

48. The representative of BRAZIL announced that her Government would make a contribution of $US 15,000 to UNHCR's programmes in 1981.

49. The representative of NORWAY said that his Government considered the refugee problem to be a joint responsibility of the international community. He hoped that it would be possible to achieve a more equitable sharing of the burden of financing UNHCR's activities and regretted that over 90 per cent of the regular budget of UNHCR continued to be covered by a small number of countries. One possible way of remedying that situation would be to initiate preparatory negotiations prior to the pledging conference.

(The representative of Norway)

50. For many years his Government had been one of the major contributors to the regular budget of UNHCR and, on numerous occasions, it had responded positively to appeals by the High Commissioner for contributions to cope with special situations. His Government would continue that policy in the future. Subject to parliamentary approval, his Government would contribute 25 million Norwegian kroner, equivalent to $US 5 million, to UNHCR's general programmes for 1981. Of that amount, which represented an increase of $US 1 million over the previous year, 4.9 million Norwegian kroner would be earmarked for the education programme.

51. The representative of BELGIUM said that, subject to parliamentary approval, his Government would contribute 20 million Belgian francs, equivalent to $US 651,000, to the general programmes of UNHCR in 1981; it would also make a contribution of 2 million Belgian francs, equivalent to $US 65,000, to meet the operating costs of the UNHCR office in Brussels. Those contributions would not preclude his Government from examining the possibility of making additional contributions to the special programmes of UNHCR at a later date.

52. The representative of HONDURAS announced that her Government would contribute $US 1,000 to the programmes of UNHCR in 1981, as it had done in 1980.

53. The representative of ITALY said that, in the Third Committee, the Government of Italy had recently pledged a contribution of 50 million lire to the High Commissioner's programme for 1980, which had subsequently been increased to 1 billion lire. Although no decision had yet been made as to the exact amount of its contribution to the programme of UNHCR for 1981, it was her Government's intention to increase it substantially. Meanwhile, it had decided to contribute 2.5 billion lire to UNHCR's special programme for Somalia and 1.75 billion lire to the special programme for Zimbabwe.

54. The representative of the LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA announced that his Government would contribute $50,000 to UNHCR's programmes for 1981. He also reiterated his Government's appreciation of and support for UNHCR's activities.

55. The representative of MADAGASCAR expressed appreciation of the High Commissioner's efforts to help refugees all over the world and said that, had it not been for the budgetary difficulties of the country, the Government of Madagascar wouldhave made a substantial contribution to those efforts. Nevertheless, he pledged a contribution of 500,000 Malagasy francs to the programmes of UNHCR.

56. The representative of AUSTRALIA confirmed that his Government would contribute 4.6 million Australian dollars to the general programmes of UNHCR for 1981.

57. The representative of UGANDA said that his Government had received assistance from the UNHCR on various occasions and had decided to contribute to the Office's programmes despite its serious problems of rehabilitation and reconstruction. His delegation would inform the Secretary-General of the details and nature of its contribution at a later date.

58. The representative of PORTUGAL reiterated her Government's support for the activities of UNHCR and confirmed that it would contribute $US 10,000 to the general programme, $US 2,500 to the special programme of assistance to the refugees in Zimbabwe and $US 2,500 to the programme of assistance for the refugees from Afghanistan.

59. The representative of ARGENTINA announced that her Government would make a contribution of $50,000, payable in Argentine currency, for 1981. That sum was intended for UNHCR activities coming within the terms of reference established by the relevant Convention.

60. The representative of LEBANON expressed gratitude for the assistance which UNHCR had given to his country, especially over the past six years. Despite its difficult situation, the Government of Lebanon would make a symbolic contribution of $US 10,000 to the general programmes of UNHCR in 1981.

61. The representative of THAILAND said that his delegation was awaiting precise instructions from the Thai Government concerning its contribution to the UNHCR programmes. He could, however, give an assurance that, subject to constitutional approval, Thailand's contribution for 1981 would not be less than that for the preceding year, and that it would be communicated to the Secretary-General as soon as possible.

62. The representative of DJIBOUTI said that his Government fully supported the activities of UNHCR and, as an expression of its appreciation and support, pledged a symbolic contribution equivalent to $US 2,000, payable in Djibouti francs.

63. The representative of NEW ZEALAND said that her Government made an annual contribution to the regular budget of UNHCR and in 1980 had made various special contributions, including $150,000 to help the refugees from Afghanistan in Pakistan and $100,000 for the repatriation of the refugees from Zimbabwe. It had also contributed to the resettlement of refugees in other parts of the world, especially Indo-China. At the current stage of its budgetary planning, the New Zealand Government was unable to announce the definite amount of its contribution, but she assured the Committee that it would not be less than the $75,000 contributed in 1980. When deciding on the amounts it would contribute to the multinational organizations, her Government would take due account of the need to increase its contributions to UNHCR.

64. The representative of QUATAR pledged $10,000 for the UNHCR programme.

65. The representative of the LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC expressed deep appreciation of the activities of UNHCR in his country since the national war of liberation and stressed the need to provide the High Commissioner with financial assistance to enable him to carry out his humanitarian work. Consequently, his Government, despite the difficulties with which it was confronted, would contribute the equivalent in local currency of $US 6,000, or three times as much as in the preceding year.

66. The representative of the SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC said that despite the economic difficulties being experienced by his country, which were exacerbated by the large number of Palestinian refugees in his country and the number of Syrian nationals displaced because of Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights, his Government would contribute 4,000 Syrian pounds to the UNHCR budget.

67. The representative of OMAN expressed his country's support for the activities of UNHCR and pledged $US 6,000 to the programme for 1981.

68. The representative of CYPRUS reiterated his gratitude to UNHCR for the work done in his country, both for the Greek population and for the Turkish population. He pledged 1,600 Cyprus pounds to the general programmes for 1981.

69. The representative of GHANA said that, although he was not yet in a position to give a precise figure, his Government would make a generous contribution. He assured the Conference that, despite its current difficulties, his country would lose no opportunity of supporting UNHCR's humanitarian work on behalf of refugees.

70. The representative of VIET NAM pledged a symbolic contribution of $US 1,000 for 1981, payable in local currency.

71. The representative of AUSTRIA reiterated his Government's earlier pledge to contribute $US 100,000 to the general programme of UNHCR for 1981. He was not yet in a position to state the amount of its contributions to the special programmes, but they would be announced in due course as soon as his Government had decided on them. The number of persons requesting asylum in his country had risen to over 7,000 during the past six months, a much higher figure than that for the preceding year.

72. The representative of the UNITED REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON said that, although her country had spared no effort to provide African refugees with the best possible living conditions, the difficult, tragic situation with which it was faced as a result of the events in Chad meant that it could only pledge for 1981 a sum equivalent to that pledged for 1980.

73. The representative of BENIN expressed appreciation of the High Commissioner's altruistic efforts to alleviate the distressing situation of refugees. She would announce the amount of her Government's contribution for 1981 at a later date.

74. The representative of ALGERIA reiterated the pledge made on 6 November 1980 at the Pledging Conference for Development Activities, namely, a contribution of $US 40,000 to the UNHCR programme.

75. The representative of MOROCCO expressed appreciation of the High Commissioner's efforts to mobilize world public opinion in order to obtain assistance for the refugees and pledged a contribution of $US 10,000.

76. Mr. HARTLING (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said he wished to thank all donors, and especially those who had increased the amount of their contributions and those who were going to contribute for the first time, since he

(Mr. Hartigan)

[illegible] not only political [illegible] his [illegible]. He informed the [illegible] $105 million. In view of the [illegible] programmes, he hoped that the [illegible] contributions at the [illegible] meeting would be [illegible].

77. The CHAIRMAN declared the [illegible] meeting closed.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.